

Survey No. F-5-123
Vernon T. Watkins Farm ca. 1920
Monrovia Vicinity
Private

CAPSULE SUMMARY

The Vernon T. Watkins Farmstead (F-5-123) is located on the west side of Maryland Route 75, northwest of Monrovia in Frederick County, Maryland. The Vernon T. Watkins Farm is an early twentieth century agricultural complex encompassing five buildings. The complex includes a two-story frame dwelling constructed ca 1920, a wood-frame barn constructed ca 1920, two ca 1920 concrete block sheds, and a wood-frame shed. The principal dwelling is an example of a house type common to the Northern Piedmont and is characterized by a symmetrical two-story block. The Vernon T. Watkins Farm historically is associated with the broad patterns of agricultural development in Frederick County. The complex does not retain its integrity of use as an operating farm. The principal dwelling is in fair condition and has been modified over time. The outbuildings are in poor to deteriorated condition.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF
HISTORIC SITES

Survey No. F-5-123

Magi No.

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Vernon T. Watkins Farm

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 5024A Green Valley Road not for publication

city, town Monrovia vicinity of congressional district 6th

state Maryland county Frederick

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<u> </u> district	<u> </u> public	<u> </u> <u>X</u> occupied	<u> </u> agriculture <u> </u> museum
<u> </u> <u>X</u> building(s)	<u> </u> <u>X</u> private	<u> </u> unoccupied	<u> </u> commercial <u> </u> park
<u> </u> structure	<u> </u> both	<u> </u> work in progress	<u> </u> educational <u> </u> <u>X</u> private residence
<u> </u> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<u> </u> entertainment <u> </u> religious
<u> </u> object	<u> </u> in process	<u> </u> <u>X</u> yes: restricted	<u> </u> government <u> </u> scientific
	<u> </u> being considered	<u> </u> yes: unrestricted	<u> </u> industrial <u> </u> transportation
	<u>X</u> not applicable	<u> </u> no	<u> </u> military <u> </u> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Rise Investments, LLC

street & number P.O. Box 228 telephone no.:

city, town Clarksville state and zip code MD 21029

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Frederick County Courthouse liber 2077

street & number North Court Street folio 1294

city, town Frederick state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title N/A

date federal state county local

 pository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. F-5-123

Condition

☐ excellent

☐ good

☒ fair

☐ deteriorated

☐ ruins

☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered

☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved

date of move

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

See Continuation Sheets

8. Significance

Survey No. F-5-123

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates Ca 1920

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

See Continuation Sheets

Survey No. F-5-123

10. Geographical Data

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

H 

11. Form Prepared By

city or town Frederick **state** Maryland

MARTIN, JAMES
100 CROWN
CROWNS

General Description

The Vernon T. Watkins Farm is an agricultural complex comprising five structures built during the early twentieth century. The complex includes a two-story wood-frame dwelling, constructed ca. 1920; a wood-frame barn, constructed ca. 1920; two concrete block sheds, constructed ca. 1920; and a wood frame shed. The principal dwelling is an example of a house type common to the northern Piedmont and is characterized by a symmetrical two-story block. The design and ornamentation of the main dwelling exhibits the influence of the Folk Vernacular style.

The Vernon T. Watkins Farm is located off Green Valley Road on the west of Maryland Route 75, north of Monrovia. A gravel drive leads to the property from Green Valley Road. The dwelling faces east. The barn is situated on a rise north of the dwelling.

Vernon T. Watkins Farmhouse

The Vernon T. Watkins Farmhouse is a two-story, three-by-two bay, wood-frame dwelling constructed ca. 1920. The house consists of a main block and rear ell that occupy an L-shaped footprint. The main block of the house is oriented to the east. The rear ell is connected to the west wall of the main block and extends west. The house is clad with synthetic siding. The building incorporates a gable roof over the main block and rear ell with an intersecting gable over the principal entrance. All roof planes are sheathed in corrugated metal panels. The building incorporates two brick chimneys; an interior end chimney rises from the west end and an interior chimney is centrally located on the roof ridge. Small four-light windows are located at the gable.

The main block of the house, which contains the primary entrance, is three bays wide and one room deep. The primary entrance, located in the center bay, features a replacement door and an infilled transom. The windows are aligned symmetrically and consist of one-over-one light, double-hung, wooden sash. Metal frame replacement windows are located at many of the window openings.

A one-story porch extends across the full width of the front (east) facade and extends on the north facade. The shed roof of the porch is sheathed in corrugated metal and is supported by simple, turned wooden posts. Two bays of the porch on the north elevation have been infilled.

Wood-Frame Barn

The barn is located northwest of the principal dwelling and is a wood-frame, gable-roofed structure occupying a rectangular footprint. The building is oriented on a north-south axis, with wide openings along its east and west facades. The structure is constructed on a stone foundation and is clad in vertical board siding. The roof is clad in corrugated metal; ornate metal finials crown the north and south ends of the roof ridge. The barn is in fair condition.

Concrete Block Shed

A concrete block shed is located south of the barn. The shed is a rectangular, one-story, one-bay structure. The shed terminates in a side gable roof sheathed with corrugated metal

seam panels. The primary (east) elevation features a replacement wood door. The shed is connected to the barn by a concrete block structure. The structure is open on the east elevation. The roof of this structure is in a deteriorated condition.

Concrete Block Shed

A concrete block shed is located northwest of the principal dwelling. The shed is a rectangular, one-story, one-bay structure. The structure terminates in a front gable roof sheathed with corrugated metal seam panels. The gable ends of the building are clad with beveled wood clapboards. The primary (east) elevation features a raised five-panel wooden door.

Wood-Frame Shed

A one-story, one-bay, wood-frame structure is located west of the principal dwelling. The building is oriented to the east. The walls and front-gable roof are constructed of corrugated metal panels. The building currently is in poor condition.

Summary

The Vernon T. Watkins Farm is an agricultural complex associated with the broad pattern of agricultural development in Frederick County during the first half of the twentieth century. A dwelling, one barn, and three sheds occupy the site. All of the farm buildings are vernacular style structures, which adopt functional designs enlivened with minimal ornamentation. Archival research suggest that the dwelling and associated buildings were constructed between 1916 and 1932 during the ownership of the 28 acre tract by the Watkins family. The property currently is owned by Rise Investment, LLC, who purchased the property in 1994 from Hilltop Development Corporation.

The farm was evaluated for those qualities of significance and integrity identified in the *National Register of Historic Places Criteria for Evaluation* (36 CFR 60). The design and physical characteristics of the complex were analyzed for their potential local significance during the Industrial/Urban Dominance period (1870-1930) in the areas of agriculture and architecture, as defined in the *Maryland Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan* (Maryland Historical Trust 1986).

The broad regional pattern of local agricultural development is reflected by the farm complex (Criteria A and C). Although the Vernon T. Watkins Farm historically is associated with the broad patterns of agricultural development in Frederick County, the complex does not retain its integrity of use as an operating farm. The majority of the agricultural buildings within the complex are deteriorated and are used for storage. The main dwelling has been modified over time and is an example of a common rural form in the Piedmont region.

Site Specific History

The approximately 28-acre property owned by Rise Investments, LLC was purchased in 1994 from the Hilltop Development Corporation. The tract of land was part of the land survey filed by Samuel Plummer on June 28, 1743 (Patent LG E:305). Designated "Pleasant Meddo," the tract encompassed approximately 150-acres "in the forks of Bush Creek" (Tracey & Dern 1987:234). In 1754, Joseph Plummer, Samuel's son increased the size of the tract to 412-acres. It was again increased in 1764 to approximately 1,777-acres. At this time the name was changed to "Land of Promise" (Tracey & Dern 1987:234).

It is unknown when the tract of the Vernon T. Watkins farm was formed. However, in 1916, Vernon T. Watkins, an established farmer, purchased 28-acres of land situated near Monrovia on the road leading from Monrovia to New Market (Williams 1979:723, Frederick County Land Record 316:274). He and his wife, Edith owned the property for approximately thirty years. When Vernon died in 1943, the property and "all that small farm in Monrovia" was sold to Harry D. Miller and his wife, Vada (Frederick County Land Record 439:520). Twenty years later the house was purchased by Lewis E. Horman Jr. and Phyllis H. Horman (Frederick County Land Records 681:347). In 1989, Hilltop Development corporation purchased the property from the Hormans. It was purchased in 1994 by Rise Investments, LLC, who currently retain title (Frederick County Land Records 2077:1294).

Historic Context - Agriculture

The agricultural history of Frederick County is documented through successive phases of crop and commodity specialization. During the eighteenth century, Frederick County was settled by English and Germans. Many of the German settlers were enroute to Virginia, but were lured to settle the Monocacy River Valley by Frederick County's rich Piedmont soils (Tracey and Dern 1987:21). The Germans settled mainly west of the Monocacy River.

The English and German settlers of this region established two distinctly different economic and cultural traditions. English settlers from the Maryland tidewater region transplanted their tobacco culture to the rolling meadows of Frederick County. Their plantations required slave labor and large plots of land located near water routes. Pennsylvania German immigrants also transplanted their lifestyles into Frederick County. These settlers generally farmed smaller plots in the hills, providing enough food for their families; corn and wheat were the primary staple crops during this period (Tracey and Dern 1987:131).

Innovations in farming techniques were emphasized during the early and mid-nineteenth century, while new machines were developed to improve agricultural production. Farmers began to utilize new methods of soil maintenance and improvement. Lime became important to these methods and the lime industry in Frederick County was established during the mid-nineteenth century. Farmers throughout the Monocacy Valley burned lime in their home kilns.

Transportation also improved dramatically during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1828, the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal Company began construction of a canal along the Potomac River from Georgetown to Cumberland. This waterway passed along the southwestern border of Frederick County (Miller 1886:136). That same year, the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad Company also began laying track between Baltimore and Frederick. The railroad was completed in 1830. A depot opened in Monrovia one year later (Whitmore and Cannon 1981:38). The C&O and B&O provided Frederick County's farms access to the urban markets of Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.

A demand for better roads, common before the C&O and B&O improvements, intensified as farmers required accessible routes to transport their products to transshipment points. Improved road surfaces encouraged a shift from draft oxen to horses; this shift allowed farmers to concentrate on breeding cattle for better beef and milk production (Lee 1982:42).

The American Civil War temporarily interrupted Frederick County's prosperity. Military operations overshadowed the everyday life of Frederick County residents. The area suffered substantial damage due to looting by both armies. Food, draft animals, and money were forfeited to both Union and Confederate troops; the tracks at Monrovia were burned by Rebel Troops in 1863. Farmers and manufacturers suffered losses due to the shortage of labor. However, with the return of the labor force at the war's end, Frederick County quickly regained its economic prosperity.

During the years following the Civil War, the Federal government reimbursed farmers for their crop and livestock losses, and banks provided loans to aid in the recovery. Frederick County farmers, benefiting from high-quality farmland and good transportation routes, quickly regained their previous prominence (Whitmore and Cannon 1981:62). Agricultural output continued to increase; by 1870, more than one million bushels of corn and wheat were produced county-wide (Scharf 1881:370).

The land outside the city limits of Frederick remained essentially free of industrial development as farming continued to dominate the community. Lake's *Atlas of Frederick County* indicates that in 1873 most of the fertile land east of the Monocacy was open farmland. Wheat and corn continued to be significant crops. By the early twentieth century, more corn was grown than wheat, and tobacco production dropped (Wesler et al. 1981:144). At the same time, dairying increased. The expanding populations in the nearby urban centers of Baltimore and Washington D.C. continued to expand Frederick County's market for agricultural goods, especially dairy products (Grisby and Hoffsommer 1949:12).

Farming continued to be lucrative until the end of World War I, when foreign markets closed. A surplus of agricultural products resulted and many farmers were forced out of business (Whitmore and Cannon 1981:100). Rising costs induced by increased mechanization and by new government health regulations, such requirements for pasteurization, also caused additional hardship for some farmers. However, Frederick County maintained its level of agricultural output. Between 1920 and 1930, Frederick County was the sole Maryland county to escape a drop in agricultural production (Wesler et al. 1981:144).

The county experienced the effects of stagnation at the beginning of the twentieth century. Increased mechanization replaced manual labor and reduced the number of jobs (Whitmore and Cannon 1981:63). In addition, the number of industries operating in the county dropped as conglomerates became more common (Wesler et al. 1981:144). As a result, many people moved to nearby cities in search of work. This problem increased after World War I, as those forced out of farming also sought work.

As a result of the absence of a significant industrial base in Frederick County, the depression years were followed by a longer than normal recovery period (Whitmore and Cannon:100). Consequently, the county's population increased slowly during the 1930s (Wesler et al. 1981:144).

Frederick County entered a new era after World War II. The expansion of the U.S. Army installation Fort Detrick provided new jobs, and many persons involved with this facility remained in Frederick, stimulating the county's economy (Whitmore and Cannon 1981:101). The construction of one of the first segments of President Dwight Eisenhower's highway program influenced the county; during the early 1950s, the Baltimore to Frederick Road (Interstate 70) was completed, reducing transportation time between the two cities by thirty minutes (Jones 1974:11).

The proximity of Frederick to Washington, D.C. and to Baltimore has increased its appeal as a bedroom community, and major roadways have been constructed to accommodate growing commuter traffic. However, much of the county has retained an agricultural character. The urban center of Frederick, with a population approaching 40,000, remains surrounded by rolling farmland and pastureland and the county continues to be one of the state's top producers of dairy products, corn, and wheat, it also maintains the rural atmosphere that makes the county a desirable place to live.

The Vernon T. Watkins Farm complex comprises the complement of built resources anticipated for a small farm active during the early twentieth century. These resources include a dwelling, a barn and storage sheds.

Historic Context - Architecture

The vernacular tradition of the Piedmont region reflects the architectural influence from two primary areas -- the Mid-Atlantic and Tidewater, each of which had district architectural folk traditions. The Pennsylvania-German introduced log and stone construction, as well as massed plan around a central chimney and banked construction. English folk housing traditions introduced to the county by Tidewater settlers were influential on the architectural development of the region. The Tidewater influences of the English are seen in timber framed houses with linear plans, end chimneys, and symmetrical facades. Hall-and-Parlor and I-House forms reflect this influence.

Frederick County's early land use patterns focused on the development of small family farmsteads, as opposed to plantations. This pattern was influenced by the topography of the area, and the absence of an extensive transportation network. Farmhouses and buildings demonstrated this development through their architectural forms. Simple, utilitarian log and stone buildings with an emphasis on function rather than ornamentation typify the Frederick County farmstead.

Late nineteenth century examples of the Frederick County farmhouse expanded the basic Georgian forms to include a five bay facade, greater emphasis on symmetry, and fashionable stylistic detailing. Advances in construction technology and building materials contributed to these changes. Milled lumber was less expensive and more widely available; balloon framing made possible greater flexibility in scale and massing. Architectural designs available through pattern books and mail order catalogues of prefabricated architectural components resulted in greater uniformity in design as well as design references to "high style" forms. The result of these influences was a middle class farmhouse design easily acquired by the average moderately successful Frederick County farmer.

The Vernon T. Watkins farm includes both residential and agricultural building types. The dwelling exhibits the I-house exterior form and mass produced architectural components, such as doors and windows. By the early twentieth century, manufacturing and distribution systems made standardized building components widely accessible and introduced a greater selection of building materials and architectural ornamentation.

Conclusion

The Vernon T. Watkins Farm is an example of a typical early twentieth century Frederick County farm complex. While, the complex historically is associated with the broad pattern of agricultural development in the county (Criteria A & C), historic documentation of the Watkins farm does not suggest that the complex is associated with significant events or the lives of a person significant in the past (Criteria A & B). The ability of the complex to convey its historic association has been compromised through building modifications. Modifications to the dwelling over time have abrogated the structures' integrity of materials and workmanship. Deterioration of the agricultural structures has abrogated those structures' integrity of workmanship and compromised the complex's integrity of feeling and association. Though historical research indicates that Vernon T. Watkins farm is associated with broad agricultural historical trends in Frederick County, architectural survey indicates that the complex does not possess the qualities of integrity necessary to convey that association and qualify for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Maryland Comprehensive Historic Preservation Plan Data

Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

Chronological/Development Periods:

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-1930

Modern Period, 1930-present.

Historic Period Themes:

Agriculture

Architecture

Resource Type:

Category: Buildings

Historic Environment: Rural

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

Agricultural/single dwelling/residence

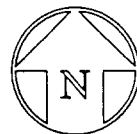
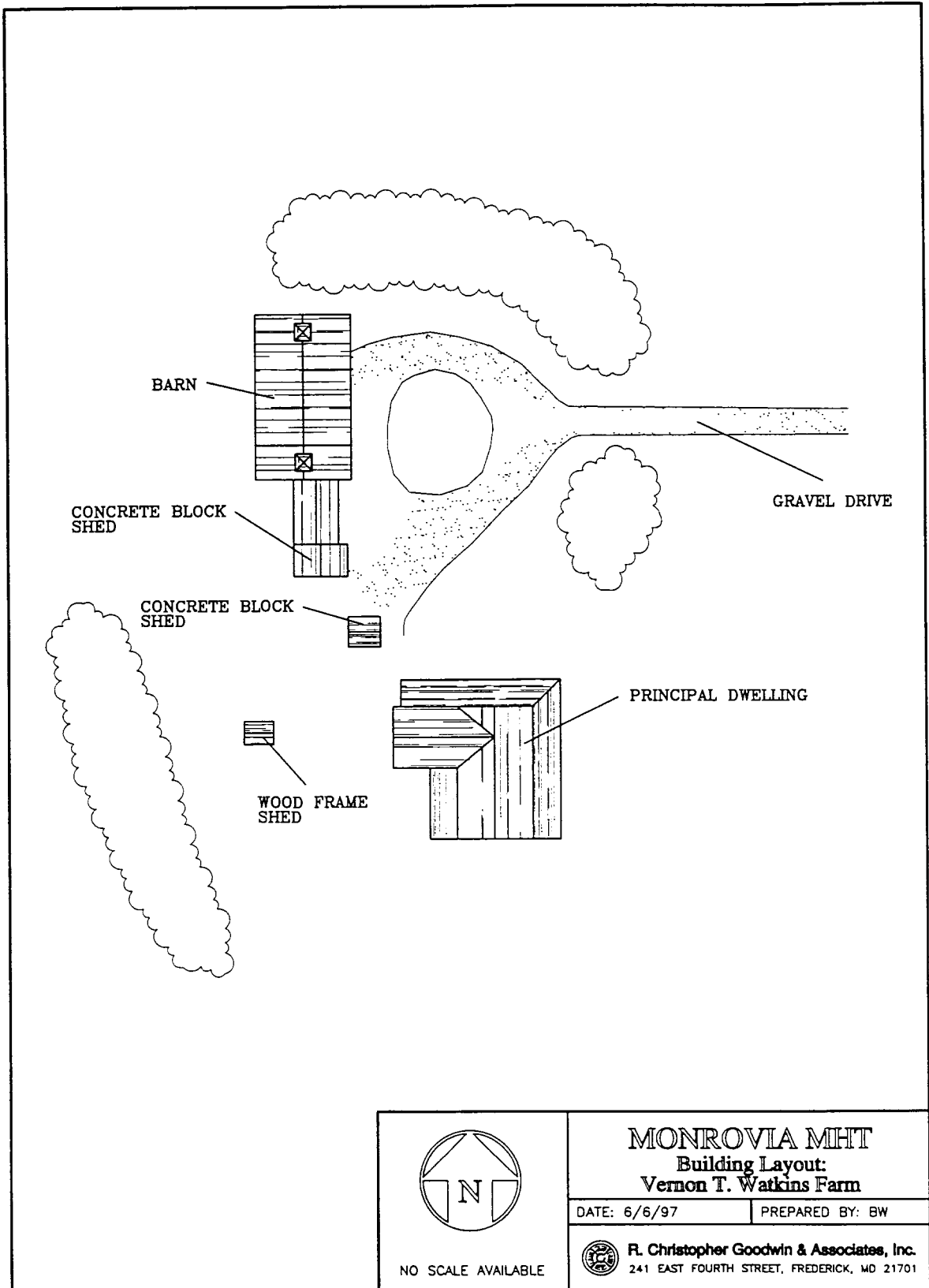
Known Design Source: None

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Frederick City Directories Consulted:
1923, 1915, 1906, 1895.

Grisby, Earl S. and Harold Hoffsommer
1949 *Rural Social Organization in Frederick County, Maryland.* University of
Maryland

Survey No. F-5-123
Vernon T. Watkins Farm
Sketch Map



NO SCALE AVAILABLE

MONROVIA MHT
Building Layout:
Vernon T. Watkins Farm

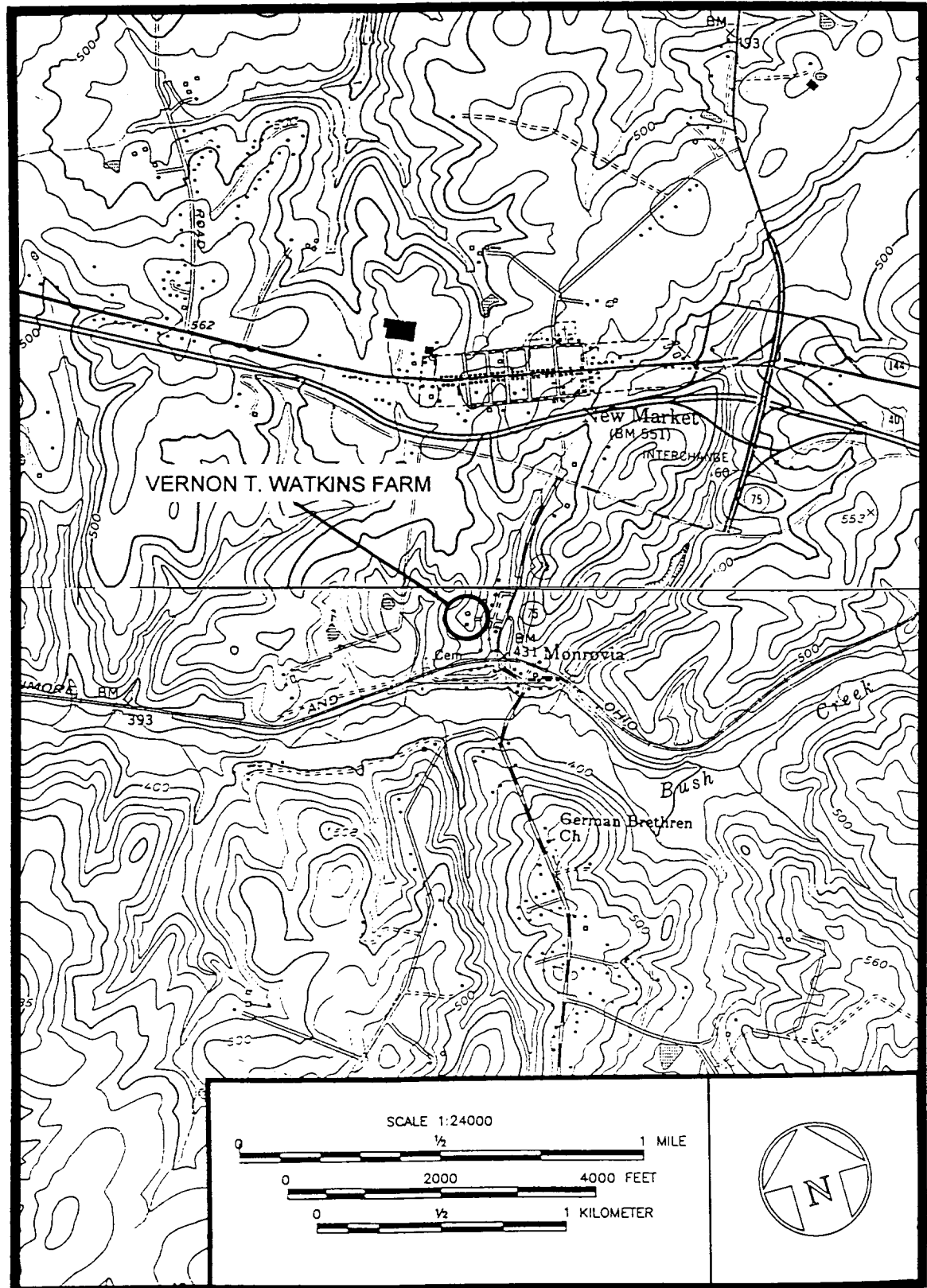
DATE: 6/6/97

PREPARED BY: BW



R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.
241 EAST FOURTH STREET, FREDERICK, MD 21701

Survey No. F-5-123
Vernon T. Watkins Farm
USGS Quad Map



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Vernon T. Watkins Farm
Frederick County, Maryland
Geoffrey E. Melhuish
Maryland SHPO

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- 2 of 5 View south, Side Elevation of Vernon T. Watkins Farmhouse
- 3 of 5 View east, Rear elevation of Vernon T. Watkins Farmhouse and Wood-Frame Shed
- 4 of 5 View northwest, Wood-Frame Barn and Concrete Block Shed
- 5 of 5 View Southwest, Concrete Block Shed



F-5-123

VERNON T. WATKINS FARM

FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

GEOFFREY E MELLISH

MAY 30, 1997

MD SHPO

Principal Dwelling, EAST FACADE

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F-5-123

VERNON T. WATKINS FARM
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

GEOFFREY E. MELHUSE

MAY 30, 1997

MD SHPO

PRINCIPAL DWELLING, NORTH ELEVATION
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F-5-123

VERNON T WATKINS FARM

FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

GEOFFREY E. MELLISH

MAY 30, 1997

MD SHPO

VIEW EAST OF WOOD-FRAME SHED AND
WEST ELEVATION OF PRINCIPAL DWELLING

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F-5-123

VERNON T. WATKINS FARM

FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

GEOFFREY E MELHUSH

MAY 30, 1997

MD SHPO

VIEW NORTHWEST OF BARN AND CONCRETE-
BLOCK SHED

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F-5-123

VERNON T. WATKINS FARM

FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

GEOFFREY E. MELLISH

MAY 30, 1997

MD SHPO

VIEW SOUTHWEST ON GRAVEL DRIVEWAY TO
CONCRETE BLOCK SHED

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